

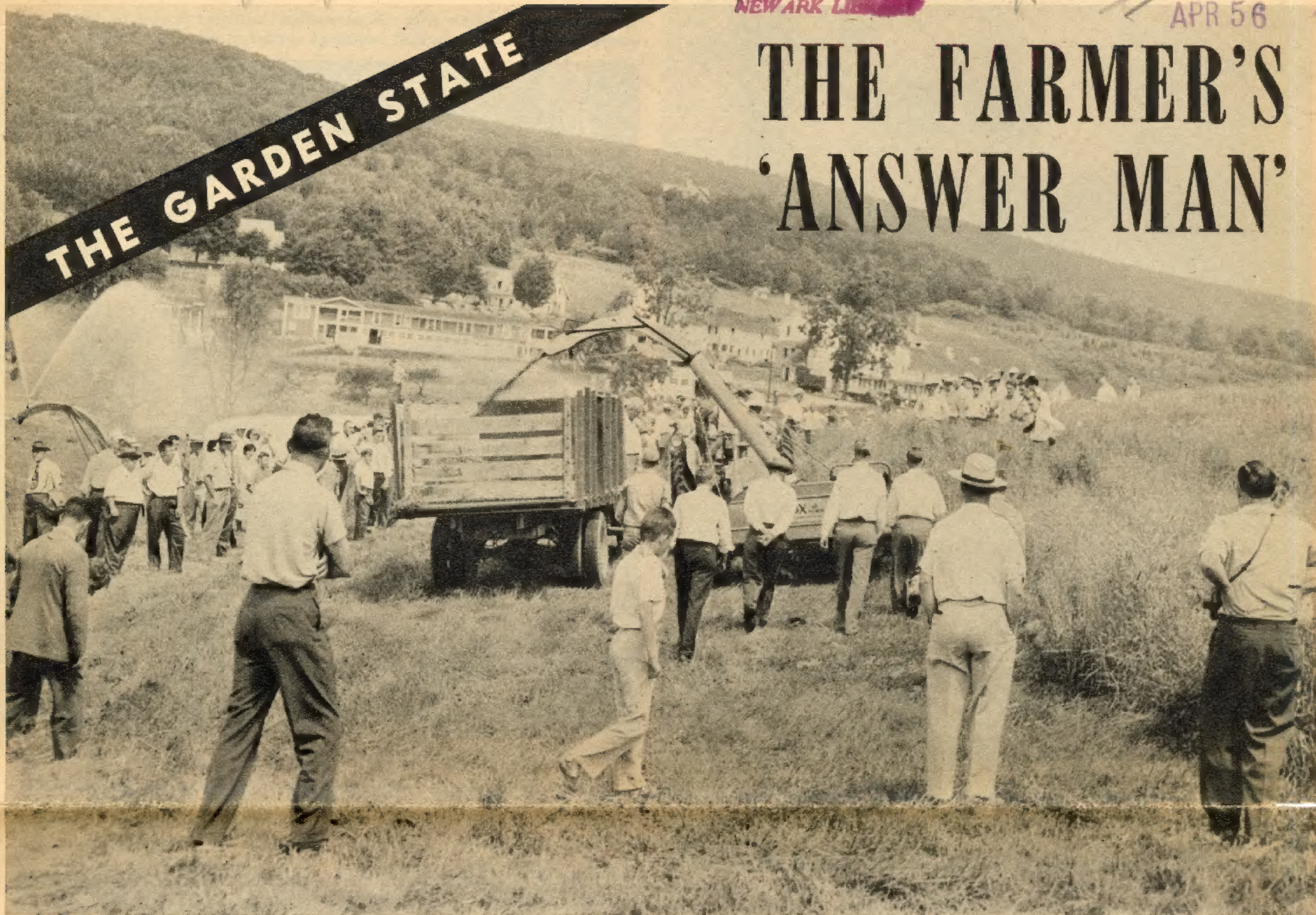
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THE GARDEN STATE

THE FARMER'S 'ANSWER MAN'



Typical of Extension Service activities to reach many people is shown in field demonstration at Beemerville experiment station.

By JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM



Mrs. Margaret C. Sheppard, Essex County home agent, and guest Wabun C. Krueger, extension engineer, on her televised weekly show.

THE JUDGE sought to help the Earnest but confused European refugee chicken farmer seeking his citizenship in Ocean County. Noting that the applicant didn't understand the question, "What is the top elective office in the United States?" the judge put it another way. "Come now," he said kindly, "who is the most important man in the United States?"

Sunshine spread over the refugee's face. Quickly and easily he replied: "The county agent!"

That kind of answer gets no man his citizenship, of course, but it indicates the standing of the county agricultural agent—the long right arm of agricultural education, the boarding-house reach which passes the latest in farm knowledge from those who've discovered it to those who want it.

Every county except Hudson has its agent, the man who heads up the local Extension Service office. There the farmer can go for practically any kind of help he needs, from the formula

for a new apple-spray to setting up a budget for his chicken farm. There, too, the farmer's wife can get advice on everything from pickling cucumbers to planning her daughter's trousseau. Forget not the children; Extension Service also is fully geared to help them through its 4-H program.

RATHER nice for the farmer, all that help. Any more, however, the farmer is just the beginning of work for Extension Service. You live in the city, you think you have termites? Your suburban lawn is ragged? Your evergreens are brown? Your six backyard tomato plants are wilted? You want a recipe for blueberry pie? All of these are urban matters which reach out to Extension Service for the answers.

If any of those questions seems unlikely, sit and listen for a day in one of the Extension Service offices in heavily urban counties like Essex, Passaic, Bergen or Union. There,

This is the sixteenth in a series of articles on New Jersey's highly diversified agriculture, vigorous and growing despite the constant inroads of industrial and residential development. Next week: Soil and Water.



Marvin A. Clark, Monmouth County agent, discusses details of a corn harvest with Miss Helen Hermann, owner of farm near Freehold.

No Problem's Too Big or Too Small for County Agents of the Extension Service to Whom Farmers Turn for Information on Subjects Ranging from Fruit, Vegetables and Dairying to Decorating and Nutrition

where residences and industries are crowding out the farms, agricultural agents are busier than ever. One peach tree in a Montclair yard or 1,000 in a Cumberland County orchard, it makes no difference to the county agent. He serves impartially.

Out in the still-rural areas—like Sussex, Warren or Hunterdon in north Jersey and Burlington, Salem and Cumberland in south Jersey—the county agent continues much absorbed with true farm problems. Nevertheless, questions from non-farmers are increasing even in the farm belts. The farmer, too, is as likely to ask about his lawn or his shrubs as he is to seek information on dairying or vegetable growing.

Thus, in mid-20th Century, the agricultural agent seems more needed than ever. All day long his telephone rings without surcease, often at night he speaks at a farmers' meeting or a garden club session. It's no place for a man with a tendency to ulcers or a desire to sit in front of the fireplace or a television set.

ONE thing has distinguished all successful county agents since the first agent started work in 1912. That is his sincere liking for people. As Lindley G. Cook, associate director of Extension Service puts it: "County

agents are extroverts, born and bred."

Today county agents have academic dignity to back them up. Each of them is a member of the Rutgers University teaching staff, with academic standing anywhere from instructor all the way up to full professor. The agent is often far from campus, he's never in cap and gown, but his function is to teach—to take the College of Agriculture classroom and the research lab to the farmer's door and into his fields.

Extension Service is by no means a 20th Century conception. Among agricultural agents themselves there is a private little joke that Squanto, the friendly Indian chief who helped the Pilgrims plant corn, was the first county agent. Squanto, they pointed out, gave advice something like this to the Pilgrims: "You plantum corn? You plantum fish first." Today that advice on soil enrichment is memorialized in the Order of Squanto, the more or less secret national society of county agricultural agents.

Through the passing years after Squanto, thoughtful agricultural leaders fretted about their inability to pass the results of applied agricultural science on to ordinary dirt farmers. Publishing such knowledge didn't help the farmer; few could read. Thus was born "demonstration," the under-



Greenhouse demonstration for Jersey growers at Watchung Farms, Madison. Reading from right are Howard Saxe, Morris County agent; Robert W. Nichols, vice president and general manager of farms; Malcolm Harrison, extension flower specialist, and Dr. O. Wesley Davidson, research specialist of Rutgers College of Agriculture.



Handbook for extension workers in food marketing captures collective interest of (from left) Charles McDougall, Bergen; Raymond Harman, Essex; Eric Peterson, Union, and Robert Windler, Passaic.

lying working tool of Extension Service.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN tried the demonstration principle on a 300-acre farm in Burlington County in 1747 to show the fertilizing value of plaster of paris. He chose a field near a well-traveled road, sprinkled the plaster in the form of large letters: THIS HAS BEEN PLASTERED. The rains caused the message to disappear, but a few days later Benjamin Franklin's lesson stood out prominently in the plastered area—in grass letters thicker and deeper in color than the rest of the field.

Others tried to help the farmer, by precept and by preaching. County agricultural societies held field days and printed their reports, but again,

who could take time from chores or who could read? Then, when the state established the College of Agriculture at Rutgers in 1864, it stipulated that someone from the college should deliver annual farm lectures in each county.

The indefatigable Dr. George H. Cook, who headed the college, for years drove up and down the state in horse and buggy delivering the annual lectures in every county. He laid the foundations for extension service, but only at the expense of incredible amounts of personal time, energy and money.

More formal extension work began in 1890, when Rutgers Scientific School gave off-campus courses. Included were sessions in agriculture—

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EXTENSION SERVICE

(Continued From Preceding Page)

reputed to be the first time in the United States that formal instruction of the extension type was applied to agriculture. Within four years 2,000 farmers annually were attending the courses given in 10 scattered towns in seven counties from Sussex to Salem.

NEVERTHELESS, the Extension Service sprouted most directly from the farmers' institutes, started in 1889 by the State Board of Agriculture. Farmers welcomed them; one farmer in 1895 declared: "... The man that thinks he knows it all and thinks he needs no instructions, is only exposing his ignorance ..."

Railroads helped spread the new farm gospel, starting in 1909 when the State Board of Agriculture rolled lectures across state in a special two-car train. Soon other farm trains put the show on the road over Pennsylvania Railroad branches—on the West Jersey & Seashore Railroad, on the Camden & Amboy and on the Belvidere & Delaware up through Hunterdon and Warren counties. Trains wound their way through the back country, stopping at stations when necessary (presumably whenever four or five overalled farmers seemed willing to lend an ear). The 20-minute lectures usually kept the farm audience hanging on nearly every word.

The state board's trains chugged only over Pennsylvania Railroad and its way branches. It took the Lackawanna Railroad to make specialized extension work a reality in New Jersey. Late in 1911 an official of the Lackawanna agreed to pay half the cost of a trained agriculturist—provided citizens of Sussex County would do the same. The Lackawanna's public spiritedness grew in large measure from the profitable milk trains rolling between Sussex County and Hoboken.

ENERGETIC Jacob Bunnell, then editor of The New Jersey Herald, "talked up" the project. On Jan. 12, 1912, county farmers, College of Agriculture representatives and Lackawanna officials met to solidify the thinking and to form the state's first Farm Bureau. Soon after, the group hired Henry W. Gilbertson, not long out of Minnesota Agricultural College, and put New Jersey's first book-totin', theory-spoutin' farmer to work in March 1912.

Mr. Gilbertson struck out over the frontier of farm education. He located and marked every Sussex farm on a county map and in his first year visited 700 farms personally. It wasn't easy. The Lackawanna naturally gave him a pass, but the railroad could only get him started on his rural way. Mr. Gilbertson traveled 6,000 miles the first year—half of it "by livery" at a cost of a little more than 12 cents per mile (at \$2 per day, including horse feed). A progressive man, Mr. Gilbertson speculated in his first report that he could do much better work "if an automobile were available."

Rutgers, meanwhile, moved to prepare for the inevitable sweep of the extension service throughout the



Charles H. Nissley, on rounds of vegetable farms since 1917, talks over early spring planting with Alfred Foerter, Milltown farmer.

state, even though only Mercer County followed the lead of Sussex in 1912. The first step at the college of Agriculture was the appointment of extension specialists in agronomy, fruit growing, vegetable culture and poultry. Firmly supporting the college's new program was the State Board of Agriculture (although, in retrospect, the board's support seemed more moral than fiscal).

OTHERS sought to make extension a solid reality. Woodrow Wilson, governor of New Jersey at the time of his election as President of the United States in 1912, envisioned a national extension (or farm demonstration) program as one of the first things he would seek in the White House. Mr. Wilson felt the Extension Service should be divorced from both the College of Agriculture and the Experiment Station, however.

Eager to have New Jersey in line, as a reinforcement for a national program, Mr. Wilson had a statewide farm "demonstration" bill introduced in the New Jersey Legislature before he left for his inauguration. Dr. Jacob G. Lipman, director of the Experiment Station, sought to show Wilson the service should be linked to the college but Wilson refused to listen. Dr. Lipman turned to an old state senator friend from Cape May, a former blacksmith at whose shop young Jacob Lipman had brought horses to be shod in boyhood days. For old times' sake, the ex-blacksmith agreed to bottle the bill in its short-sighted clause in committee.

Mr. Wilson moved on to Washington. Still earnestly wishing a New Jersey extension service as a national springboard, the President put pressure on the senator from Cape May. The senator wouldn't budge; after all, Mr. Wilson wasn't governor any more—he was only President!

Amended to put the "demonstration" work under the Experiment Station, the Wilson-prompted bill became New Jersey law in April 1913. Thir-

teen months later Mr. Wilson, deeply interested in the cause despite the minor Jersey reversal, signed into national law the Smith-Lever act—which authorized land-grant colleges to organize cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics.

SUSSEX and Mercer continued their agents; Monmouth, Bergen and Atlantic appointed agents in 1914; Cape May, Middlesex, Burlington and Cumberland followed in 1915; Morris and Passaic took up the extension torch in 1916. By 1918 Gloucester, Ocean, Salem, Camden, Somerset, Warren and Essex counties also had appointed agents. Of the state's highly rural counties, only Hunterdon stubbornly resisted the trend.

Mere appointment of an agent didn't make farmers take to him. Every county had a few progressive agriculturists, and they welcomed the agents, but every county had far more stubborn foes of the downy-cheeked young "book farmers" coming out to tell them how to grow corn or milk cows. Early agents fought ignorance, superstition, stubbornness and rural narrowness down on the farms. They also fought the battle of movement as they walked across plowed fields, rode bicycles or motor cycles over muddy lanes, or drove uncertain model T's over snow-clogged country roads.

World War I gave the county agent a surer footing with farmers because the country's dire food needs forced farmers to heed new methods. Unquestionably the war advanced the service many years; by 1920, as Jersey farmers gathered about cracker barrels and pot-bellied stoves in country stores, many a good word mingled with the sneers about "white-collar" farmers.

HUNTERDON COUNTY in the midst of its poorest days, hamstrung by high county tax loads, exhausted land and hundreds of idle farms, became the last stronghold of the anti-extension forces. A local Grange fought the

service, helped overwhelm a referendum for a Hunterdon County agent in 1922. Four years later strong forces rallied behind a similar referendum and it passed. Hunterdon County finally appointed an agent in 1927. Hunterdon dates its return to agricultural pre-eminence to that period—not that the agent did it all, but he surely led the way.

Hunterdon lagged, for sure—but that in no way means that everywhere else county agents received only joyful welcomes. A. Howard Saxe, currently "dean" of all New Jersey county agents, found only a handful of farmers willing to listen to his "book" recommendations when he arrived in Morris County in 1921. M. A. (Mac) Clark, who landed in Monmouth County in 1924, found farmers "didn't mind a clean face, but they suspected too-clean hands."

Still, as agents learned then, and still learn in 1955, one of the duties of a county agent is to change the thought patterns of farmers. Slowly the tillers of the soil began to realize that no longer could a son learn all about farming from his father. They began to listen to the agents. As a consequence, fewer agents left the service for higher-paying commercial jobs—a disturbing factor in the early days of rapid agent turnover.

IF the male agent had difficulty, consider what farmers thought of the pioneer lady home demonstration agents who sought to interest farm wives in bettering their lot. Regular agricultural Susan B. Anthonys, them lady agents, makin' maw unhappy with her nice kitchen pump, makin' her think about dollin' up and always talkin' about vitamins and such stuff. Even talkin' about new wallpaper and inside bathrooms and electric lights and new ways of cookin' and the like.

Home demonstration agents joined the New Jersey service soon after 1914 laws created them. At first they stuck closely to teaching mere household skills, then gradually moved into less tangible areas—areas where the farm wife became important in thinking, planning and making decisions along with her husband. The program paid big dividends for the farmer—in happier, healthier, better-looking help-mates with a little imagination at meal time, with snap and style in their clothes and with a partner's voice on the farm.

Today the County Extension Office is as firmly established as the courthouse, as necessary to farming as plowing and harvesting, as vital to the farmer and his family as anything in their lives. The volume of work carried on by the 20 state offices is an astounding reflection of this.

LAST year the 20 offices combined for 37,800 home or farm visits—an average per office of 1,890 visits. They had 51,401 office calls—2,570 per office. They answered 132,690 telephone calls—6,630 per office. They sent out 311,378 bulletins—15,500 per office. They attended 9,500 meetings—475 per office. At nearly every one of those meetings someone from the office spoke.

Not long ago the "city" agents—like Raymond Harman of Essex, Rob-

ert Windeler of Passaic, Charles McDougall of Bergen and Eric Peterson of Union—had to take a great deal of joshing whenever they mingled with the "farm" agents. "You boys up there are just making work," the farm agents might quip. Now there is a clear recognition that the "city" job can be as difficult as the rural job.

Mr. Harman, by way of illustration, has files in his Caldwell office bulging with information on 4,300 subjects. He points out that close to 85 per cent of his calls come from non-farmers. Messrs. Harman, Windeler, McDougall and Peterson all find lawns a No. 1 problem, but they also answer an infinite variety of questions—about termites, shrubs, garden grubs, moles, roadside markets, insecticides, pruning. Some of the questions at times seem far-fetched to an outsider; to a true extension man, nevertheless, questions are bread-and-butter. Without them he is undernourished.

Out in the dairy lands, down in the chicken country, deep down in the south Jersey vegetable country, however, the agent is still a farm man. He's important, he's respected, he's listened to. He's a vital local figure—maybe the "most important man in the United States" to lots of people. That's probably one of the reasons he stays on; surely it must be admitted it's not because the pay is anywhere near in line with his vast fund of knowledge and his long working hours.

The county agent is on the end of a two-way line, with the College of Agriculture and the N.J. Experiment Station on the other. Midway between are the station's 30 extension specialists—whose job it is to keep up to date on all research in a particular field (fruit, vegetables, dairying, poultry, clothing, nutrition, decorating, etc.). The specialists must also pass on information in quick-to-grasp form.

BEING a specialist is no ivory tower stint. The specialists must—and do—get out into the field often. They are familiar figures to farmers everywhere. A few examples of those best known are Charles H. Nissley, who has been making the rounds of the state's vegetable farms since 1917; Enos J. Perry, dairy specialist since 1923 and the man who introduced artificial breeding of cattle to America; Wabun C. Krueger, in charge of farm engineering since 1930; Arthur J. Farley, amiable fruit specialist from 1913 until his recent retirement, and John C. Taylor, in poultry extension work since 1927.

There are many other specialists—a total of 31, to be exact—and nothing can be proved by listing all by name. Not all have had long careers in extension, a fact of little consequence today. The farmer is no longer suspicious of a specialist merely because his hair is still jet black and his cheek shows only minor evidence of shaving damage. Or, in the case of home demonstration agents, because she is attractive in her own right.

So the agent gets information, passes it on to his constituents. He also picks up vexing problems in the field, passes them on up to New Brunswick for researchers to tackle. He gets the answers back, takes them out

to the field. Particularly important is this latter function. The agent exists on the demands of those whom he serves.

Once many farmers looked on the county agent as an extra "hand," available at harvesting time or lambing time or planting time. Today the farmer no more expects this type of "service" from the agent than he might from a veterinarian. The Extension Service seeks constantly to reach ever broader numbers of people, and this is best accomplished through meetings or "demonstrations." An agent, for example, will take 40 or 50 fruit growers at once to an orchard to explain a new pruning practice. Or, like Mr. Harman in Essex, he may hold sessions where he shows hundreds of people at one time how good lawns are made and kept.

IN much of the extension work—particularly that involving farm wives and 4-H work—great emphasis is placed on volunteer local leaders. The trained home demonstration agent or 4-H Club worker gathers volunteers and teaches them to work with groups in their own communities. Thus, many women's groups and youth clubs hold thousands of farm meetings annually with no paid extension worker present.

Recently there has evolved the belief that farm life can't be separated into sowing, harvesting, marketing, family, home, youth, education and so on. Rather, it must be considered as an overall pattern. Consequently, extension workers are now developing an integrated program—where the relationships of farm parents and children are shown to be directly linked to the economic and spiritual success of a farm.

The principle of closely integrating all extension work to fit the total farm pattern is a fundamental part of the philosophy of Lindley G. Cook, associate director of extension work. Director of the service is William H. Martin (also dean of the College of Agriculture and director of the Experiment Station). However, actual administration is in the hands of Cook—a relative, by the way, of the noted Dr. George H. Cook, most dominant figure in early New Jersey agricultural education history.

Lindley Cook is "Mr. Extension" to many farm families throughout the state. Graduated from Rutgers in 1914, Cook interspersed various duties at the College of Agriculture with service in private industry and government work until he became associate director in 1945. His belief is that extension service must continue to reach out to more and more people, must seek to give them a tightly knit and unified leadership.

REACHING out to more and more people is a natural goal for Extension Service. That involves many things. Newspaper articles and feature stories, as a starter (readers of The News are familiar with the regular feature stories by Raymond E. Harman and Margaret C. Sheppard). It means bulletins and leaflets to answer quickly questions which arise regularly (such as "How do I get rid of moles?"). It means radio and TV shows (Mrs. Shep-



Lindley C. Cook, associate director of Rutgers Extension Service (seated, left), joins county agricultural agents in chuckle over amusing anecdote relayed by C. Fred Lorenzo, Warren. From left, rear: Wilbur M. Runk, Cumberland; Dwight M. Babbitt, Hunterdon; John W. Rabb, Sussex, and Marvin A. (Mac) Clark, Monmouth.



Austin N. Lentz, extension forester, giving field demonstration of woodland propagation to New Brunswick high school students.

pard has a weekly TV show in Essex; a Philadelphia station has started carrying a weekly show staffed by New Jersey extension workers).

The work is satisfying, apparently. Many of the agents have had long careers. Howard Saxe has been in Morris County 34 years, George Lamb in Gloucester 32 years, Mac Clark in Monmouth 31 years, "Dutch" Harman in Essex 29 years, John Brockett in Atlantic 28 years, "Bob" Gardner in Somerset 28 years, George Ball in Salem 27 years, Dwight Babbitt (now in Hunterdon) has been in the service 29 years (including Cumberland County work). Henry H. White had been Cape May agent for 28 years before his retirement this winter. This is a solid tribute both to the agents and the reception they now get in their communities.

Behind the veterans, however, there is a new group of assistants and

younger agents. Whether or not the service makes for a good family life might be illustrated with Bob Gardner, assistant in Salem County, and Bob Gardner, Somerset agent. Bob of Salem is the son of Bob of Somerset.

Now it's planting time again in Jersey for the Bob Gardners and all the other agents. It's time to ask how a new corn hybrid is going. Time to ask for suggestions on fertilizing 50 acres of potatoes. Time to ask for feeding suggestions for a 50-foot-square lawn. Time the agent shook loose from a winter of studying and making speeches and organizing clubs and answering telephones and writing letters and sending out bulletins. It's time to get out in the open. Spring and the agent go hand in hand.

(Note: 4-H Club work, a vital part of the Extension Service, will be examined more closely in a subsequent article on farm youth.)